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CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS URBAN
REDEVELOPMENT IN KENYA:
THE OLD BONDENI REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

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ABSTRACT

The Old Bondeni area, the former 'native location' of Nakuru, was scheduled for demolition and redevelopment some twenty years ago. Aside from demolition at the periphery carried out in the 1950s, the bulk of housing still stands. This has not been for want of administrative initiative. Bondeni represents a rare case study which permits one to consider shifts in official position and changing attitudes towards redevelopment as applied to a single community. This paper discusses the various plans and suggestions put forward over the years, the climate of opinion within officialdom which these reflected, and the reactions and expectations these initiatives aroused in the community residents.

INTRODUCTION

A generation of Kenyans has grown up since the Old Bondeni area was first scheduled for demolition and redevelopment. The series of plans and initiatives fills many municipal files. Bondeni represents a rare case which permits us to consider shifts in official position and changing attitudes towards redevelopment as applied to a single community.¹

In the first part of the paper we will trace the antecedents of the policy which resulted in a decision by the Municipal Council in 1953 that Old Bondeni be demolished. The subsequent sections will deal with the implications of the failure (and fragmentary implementation) of that programme and the redevelopment schemes proposed since, for what they can tell about changing approaches to policy-formation and urban development. The accent will be on the changing view of the African townsman, the nature of his urban commitment and what obligations the town bears him.

The concluding section reconsiders this case with a view to raising briefly the social problems of a community facing redevelopment. Finally, the difficult position facing the municipal administration is recapitulated and a case made for returning this sort of problem to the community level.

IDEOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC CONGRUENCE

The first sections of this paper deal with the period before the end of the Second World War. This was a period when the congruence of interests and viewpoints between the agricultural settler community and the urban service community was quite exact; a period when clearly the town was run for its hinterland.² The African worker in Nakuru, like his rural counterpart, the squatter, lived there not by right but by sufferance of the authorities.³ The town preferred to ignore him. This was a convenient ideology which kept the African invisible and thereby made it possible for urban authorities to minimise any obligations towards him, and so concentrate resources on developing services for the expatriate population.

1. For a parallel discussion of urban development policies from a more general perspective, see Stren, 20.

2. For the extent of the town's subordination to the 'country', see Elspeth Huxley, 10. She quotes Lord Delamere, the most influential settler in the Nakuru area, as telling an audience made up mostly of Nakuru businessmen that he did not favour spending money on the town's development because he did not want to see the creation of "cow towns" in such a small country. (p. 255)

3. The comparison may seem inexact because labour was seen as transient contract labour, while the rural squatter was stabilised labour. I will maintain the comparison, however, because the case area, Old Bondeni, was started as a location for long-term dwellers. For a discussion of the rural side of the comparison, see Furedi, 3.

The maintenance of this fiction of invisibility required mostly negative policies, policies aimed at control and which safeguarded the interests of the dominant community. Control was attempted through public health by-laws, demarcating segregated residential areas, restricting access to the town, etc. These policies touched on housing in several ways and represented the context within which Old Bondeni, the African Location, grew up; however, it was not a housing policy. Housing policy (and more broadly, community development policy) was incompatible with such a viewpoint; so long as there was no positively-conceived place for an African community in town, for African townsmen, there was no sense in a housing policy.

With a growing African population in Nakuru and a more complex relationship coming into being between the town and its rural surroundings, the fiction became at once more difficult to maintain and less convenient. It was at this point, in the mid to late 1930s, that the invisibility of the Africans became most clearly defined in legal terms⁴ and began to break down in practice. The changes in policies that these strains demanded had to await the post-war period and will be discussed in later sections.

Before introducing the case material it is necessary to emphasise that this presentation is a simplification. The position of the African in Nakuru was a by-product of general policy concerning African labour in colonial Kenya of that period.⁵ That was that Africans should not be detribalised, not stabilised as a work force permanently outside tribal areas and tribal controls. This philosophy meant that labour need be a minimal drain on the urban purse (as African community supports were in the reserves); in fact that expenditure should be minimal because the provision of urban services beyond a certain level would encourage detribalisation, false expectations, etc. After all, Kenya's colonial economy depended on its maintaining a competitive position in world commodity markets. That demanded a cheap labour economy with wages maintained at or even just below the subsistence level of the work force which in the latter case was subvented by non-cash inputs from the reserves.

4. See the discussion on the Control of Persons (Africans) Bylaws which follows.

5. This discussion involves a further simplification in that many Kenyan colonial policies represented inputs from other areas, especially South Africa, India and Great Britain itself. (I leave aside the policy of indirect rule enunciated by Lugard and others.) See, for example, Orde-Browne, 16.

Nakuru: Early Central Place Functions

Nakuru came into existence as a railway station in 1900. It was to become an important rail centre because it marked that point in the Uganda line where it started to grade upward over the western wall of the Great Rift Valley. In 1904 it was gazetted a township with an area defined by a circle of one mile radius with the railroad station at its centre. At that date it consisted of a loco-shed, station, some railway housing and two Indian dukas, the beginning of a bazaar.⁶

Its place of importance as a railway town was enhanced when it became headquarters for the Northern Railway District in 1906. Its stock rose still further when the government moved the Provincial Headquarters from Naivasha to Nakuru in 1908 because of Nakuru's more central position. Nakuru had a particularly healthy climate and was located between two arresting sights - Lake Nakuru and Menengai Crater. So to its other features, Nakuru added a modest attraction as a resort; the first hotel going up in 1906. (see 10)

These functions played by Nakuru, that of communications/transportation node, administrative centre, and recreational, commercial, and then agro-industrial focus for an important segment of the settler community, presaged its growth and shaped its development. The accommodation to growth, the directions in which development was fostered, the contradictions that built up in terms of defining a place for Africans in the town, must all be seen in respect to this complex of functions.

Just Passing Through: Early Definitions of the African's Place in Nakuru

The pattern of residential segregation was formalised early in Nakuru's development. In 1913 the township area was tripled to ten square miles. This was divided (for administrative purposes and not officially) in 1914 into six areas: government officers' quarters, the Indian bazaar, European business quarter, European residential area, Indian 'coolies' lines and the native lines.

Africans of course resided in small numbers in all sections of town. Outside of their labour lines some lived as house servants and employees on their employers' property. Africans as a group were still administratively invisible.

In 1914 the African population of Nakuru numbered 500, while by 1918 it stood at perhaps 800. The population growth was all the more noticeable in that during the war the expatriate population had declined. (22, pp. 13-14)

6. Much of this historical material is taken from Tamarkin, 22.

A further influx of population occurred in the period following World War I, stimulated by the peacetime business recovery. It was at this point that Old Bondeni began. It was the first African residential area (as opposed to institutional labour lines). It grew up within a rough rectangle of land directly south of the railway landlines and administration lines, with an initial focus at the northeast corner where a mosque and secondarily a C.M.S. mission were established.

The right to build in Old Bondeni was granted to individuals who had done service for the crown in the war effort and to other Africans of good character who came to establish themselves in the town. This early group of householders is to be considered the first group of Africans who were acknowledged as town dwellers as opposed to migrant labour in Nakuru. They too were people out of their place though, truly displaced people. They were Swahilis or Swahilicised people from the coast, from Tanzania, from Ukamba, i.e. far from their homelands, who had business in town. Some (like the smaller community of Somalis who were at this time establishing a comparable neighbourhood just northeast of Old Bondeni) had been engaged in the long-distance cattle trade.⁷ Others it seems were headmen in railway crews and so might expect better housing than a ten by ten foot room in the labour lines.

The right to build in Old Bondeni was granted subject to two provisos which expressed the administration's attitude towards Africans in town. An individual who was granted a temporary occupation license through the D.C. could construct a dwelling with the approval of the public health authorities. Upon payment of annual (peppercorn) rates, the householder could live on the plot indefinitely. However, licenses could be withdrawn at any time upon three months' notice without compensation being payable for the housing.⁸ The land always remained the possession of the crown. The first proviso then was that as a group Africans must not come to represent a public health nuisance, and maintenance of minimum standards would be expected even within the segregated area. The second and more fundamental provision was that Africans, even the most established ones, were not of the town but resided there on sufferance. Insecurity was institutionalised. Licensees did not own the land their house stood on and their right to the house itself was terminable at any point. Moreover, in law (but not in practice) the licenses were not transferable; they couldn't be sold, given away or passed on to heirs.

7. From interviews with Old Bondeni elders, February and March 1974.

8. These conditions meant that construction was in non-permanent materials and not in stone.

In the first few years of its development, licensees in Old Bondeni put up family dwellings. These were rectangular four- or six-roomed houses, the broad side of which contained the central doorway fronting the plot. The houses were of mud and pole or mud-brick construction, plastered over, with a peaked roof. The door opened on a central passageway which ran through the dwelling giving out on a rear courtyard with its outbuildings, stores, etc. These were traditional urban family dwellings (so called majengo housing) of a kind found widely throughout East Africa.

The inherent flexibility and expansibility of this house form meant that even slight land pressure made it worthwhile to extend the house and take in lodgers. In 1921 it was decided that the Uasin Gishu branch line would start at Nakuru and a further influx of railroad labourers into Nakuru took place.⁹ The railway had built 150 rooms in their camp (called Ziwani) by 1920,¹⁰ but now there was a spillover into adjacent Old Bondeni. To take advantage of this situation, householders added rows of single rooms along one or both sides of the courtyard at the back of their houses. This resulted in a structure shaped like a hollow rectangle around a central courtyard/passageway with the housefront now being the narrower side.

Within this arrangement there is considerable flexibility for the owner. The larger rooms of the original family dwelling (still identifiable by the higher roofline) might be turned into shops or businesses facing the road. Small back rooms with external doors might be used as charcoal stores. Rooms might be let singly or in combination.

Attractive features for the tenant were the relative privacy of his own door combined with quite good security in that rooms opened onto an interior passage and strangers would inevitably be noticed.

In the 1920s, although the African population of Nakuru (and especially that of Old Bondeni) was growing, policy with regard to the African's place in town was not further defined. During the first half of the next decade the African population first declined to perhaps 3,000 from a level of about 3,500 and then stabilised at about 3,150.¹¹ That was still a very sizeable population and when the area began to recover from the worst of the depression there could be no justification for continuing to ignore it. Effective control of that population could not be achieved merely by enacting

9. From interviews with Mzee Titi, Old Bondeni, March 1974.

10. East African Railway, District Surveyor's Office, registers.

11. Municipal Council of Nakuru, Annual Reports, 1932 and 1936. All figures were estimates based on an administrative survey of Africans in town taken in 1931.

strict bylaws;¹² the Municipal Board had to establish closer contact.

Fundamental changes in the economic structure of Nakuru started in the mid-1930s which created further contradictions in the defined position of Africans in town. Some accommodation to the necessities of the altered economic situation was attempted; some community services were started or encouraged by the Board. But policy didn't alter quickly because of ideological inertia (Nakuru's leadership remained much the same into the post-war period), and because of the administrative disruption caused by World War II. The recovery in Nakuru's hinterland in the late 1930s included attempts at substantially diversifying the agricultural economy. This made possible a more broadly based industry in the town and important agro-industries joined the few already there.

Housing pressure grew as well, and along with it demand for further services. Fair numbers of people were being housed by their employers; one example was the Nakuru Blanket compound (on their factory grounds on the eastern outskirts of town far from the Native Locations). The Municipality was able to build a few rooms for its staff: in 1942 and 1944 they put up 33 rooms for works employees and brewery staff, mostly in the Municipal Depot area just north of the Railway's African Quarters.¹³ Nonetheless Old Bondeni had been absorbing a large number of people and overcrowding was already regarded as serious by the Board. In 1943 it was estimated that Old Bondeni housed 2,000 people. In 1944 a separate Native Housing Committee was set up. It proposed demolition of the location and called for the appointment of a European location superintendent. (22, p. 34) Further elaboration of this policy of demolishing and redeveloping Old Bondeni, and integration of this plan into a wider housing and development policy, awaited the end of the war.

STABILISATION OF THE WORK FORCE, A NEW URBAN FOCUS AND JUNIOR-PARTNER MULTI-RACIALISM

A number of forces came together in the post-war period to redefine the position of the African population in town and formulate the specifics of a housing programme which took that position into account. Some of these forces had been undermining the old position for a decade and more, others had just arisen. Together they formed a new synthesis; one not entirely divorced from the old definitions but clearly representing a new direction.

The diversification of the economic base of the town and especially the establishment of industries which were fairly sophisticated technically

12. For a discussion of the implications of these control measures on housing and urban development, see Van Zwanenberg, 23.

13. Municipal Board of Nakuru, Annual Reports, 1942, 1944. Hereafter these will be referred to in the text simply as Annual Reports.

made greater demands on the labour force. In all but the most unskilled work, experience was an advantage and there were costs of high labour turnover. As industries became important in the town, the notion of a stabilised African urban work force gained currency.

The growth of this industrial sector, and especially the large agro-industries, had another and even more profound effect. It altered the nature of the symbiotic relationship between hinterland and town.¹⁴ Increasingly Nakuru was becoming more important as a market for the farmers' produce than they were as a market for the town. Nakuru became development-conscious and more urban-focussed. Further development meant further industry. In order to attract new industry the town had to supply basic infrastructure, adequate water supply, rail or road-serviced industrial plots, and other amenities including provision for housing the work-force.

Taking a new position was easier too because of changes in both the European and African populations in Nakuru. The development ideology (and with it a 'Nakuru-first' feeling) gained ground as a new wave of European migrants, many of them ex-servicemen, settled in town to take up technical and professional jobs.¹⁵ Within a matter of years this group had a powerful voice in the municipal government.¹⁶ Changes in the African population were also important. The experiences and the perspectives gained by Africans who served in the global conflict introduced a new sophistication and a stridency into the community. That element was important nationally in the further development of politically-oriented groups and labour unions and in Nakuru in the emergence of a strong and articulate voice which argued for greater participation by the African community in its own affairs and in the interests of the town. (For a lengthy discussion, see 22.)

The socio-political slant which the European community found congenial was less paternalistic and more realistic; it recognised the legitimate existence of an African community in the town and the desirability of making it a responsible, able and committed one. In this view, African demands could be satisfied and African efforts could be directed into a long-term evolution towards parity. This was then an ameliorative and gradualist policy whereby the African as junior partner and the European as mentor and senior partner were to work for development in their mutual best interests.

14. For a general discussion of a contentious nature on the balance that should be struck between city and hinterland, see Gerhart, 5.

15. From interviews with Mr. W. Sayer, Nakuru, 1974.

16. See Tamarkin, 22, p. 25, for a discussion of the rise of the Nakuru Township Association formed in 1948 to promote Nakuru as a centre for secondary industry. It elected a number of members to the Board in 1949, and in 1951, when a prominent member became chairman of the Board, its job was done and it dissolved.

A housing policy in the broad as well as the narrow sense was called for by all these factors. It would help attract industry, stabilise the work-force, and by ameliorating the African's life in town encourage commitment and increase satisfaction with the current order of things.¹⁷

The Decision to Demolish - Early Plans

The new urban development initiative that built up slowly following World War II reacted to the need for housing for Nakuru's African population. Inadequate housing created a threefold problem : first of all, a health problem caused by overcrowding,¹⁸ poor sanitation,¹⁹ and so on; a social problem represented by high rents for inadequate accommodation, a floating population with no permanent abode at all, etc.; and an economic problem in that business could hardly be attracted or encouraged to expand if there was no place for its labour force to find reasonable lodging in the town.

In 1946 the Town Planning Advisor was considering revisions in the lay-out of the locations and certain plans were firming up : sites for new government and railroad housing for example. However it was to be a slow start. The Nakuru Board reported that though "housing accommodation in Nakuru [was] acute for all races, until building materials [were] in free supply little improvement would be effected. Consideration [would] have to be given to alternate building materials and probable relaxation of the Bylaws." (Annual Report, 1946)

A provisional Development Plan was exhibited for public comment in 1947. Because there was such a pressing need for housing, a 'temporary' substandard scheme (Pangani) was underway and nine ten-room landhies were completed and occupied that year. There was a long waiting list. The scheme was completed in the following year and added 324 rooms to the housing stock. (Annual Report, 1947)

In 1948, the Development Plan was approved by the Board. It set out the policy to be adopted with respect to Old Bondeni:-

17. For a good discussion of this shift in policy, see Stren, 19.

18. Municipal authorities, investigating conditions in Old Bondeni in the early 1950s, were surprised at the extent of overcrowding. One notable case was that of a room 8' x 12' which was occupied by eight adults, some using it by night and others, who worked night shifts, sleeping there during the day. (From interviews with Mr. W. Sayer, Nakuru, 1974)

19. Sanitation problems included, aside from inadequate pit latrines and the like, a large number of goats and sheep which created a continual nuisance. Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 18 June 1952.

A large proportion of the houses in this location have reached a stage when they are barely fit for human habitation. Schemes have been put forward by the African Location Planning Sub-Committee and duly approved whereby a fresh area is to be laid out with plots available to Africans and employers of labour, for building in permanent materials on a 99-year lease, in accordance with plans approved by the Municipal Board. Facilities will be offered to lessees of existing plots in the old Location to move to the new area and, at a future date when the ground occupied by the present Location has recovered, rebuilding will commence. In the meantime, no further building is to be permitted in the old Location. The project has been discussed by the Nakuru African Advisory Council, where the general reaction was extremely favourable. It is, however, felt by the Advisory Council that the present suggestion that existing temporary occupation licenses for plots in the old Location should terminate after five years, is too short a period and an extension is under consideration.

A second aspect of municipal policy was also made official that year: the budget debate produced a resolution that "a housing fund be started to provide, progressively, housing for labour; first in temporary material and afterwards the accumulation of a fund for building in permanent materials for this purpose." (Annual Report 1948).

Because there was little chance of building up a housing fund quickly and borrowing on the scale necessary was difficult to arrange, the municipal authorities looked for ways of sharing the burden. One expedient for spreading the burden that the Municipal Board considered was "that new plots should be offered as soon as possible to house owners in the old location, whose notices to demolish can only become effective five years after alternative plots have been provided".²⁰ Municipal authorities soon reconsidered this plan as they convinced themselves that it would likely result in substandard housing being re-erected. An experiment with a tenant purchase scheme proved inconclusive. No workable solution to municipal housing had been found.

20. Annual Report, 1949. As it turns out this was one of the most benign of the misconceptions that plagued the negotiations between Bondeni residents and the municipal authorities. According to the original post-World-War-II leases, the sites could be reclaimed on as little as three months' notice. For a long time municipal officials did not have examples of the original leases (nor even apparently of later forms issued in the late 1920s by the D.C.'s office). When the authorities later re-evaluated their position vis-a-vis homeowners and felt able to take a much stronger stance, this only added to the sense of misunderstanding and antagonism.

The Start - Quit Notices

As 1953 approached the municipal authorities²¹ found themselves confronted with their own deadline for starting to demolish Old Bondeni. There were several incentives to get on with this. The first, certainly the first one mentioned, was to remove the menace to public health Old Bondeni represented. Aside from that there were less tangible concerns: the desire to meet development goals, to progressively improve the town in an orderly fashion, and closely related to that, the desire of the newly constituted urban authority to remove what was in their eyes a symbol of the old, now unacceptable ways. And there was an overtly political interest as well: with the declaration of the Emergency, the disorder and the largely unpoliced activities in Old Bondeni were perhaps threatening and certainly undesirable. (Annual Report, 1952)

But demolition depended on the provision of alternative housing. And as there seemed to be no other expeditious way (as we saw above) for this to be provided, the Council was forced to undertake the building itself. Even though the Council committed itself to give priority to African housing (Housing Committee meeting, 9 June 1952) and planned to borrow what was at the time a very large sum to fulfill that commitment,²² because there were other calls on the housing, Bondeni's demolition could not be planned in a single or even a few stages. But some beginning needed to be made. On August 31, 1953 the Council formally served "notices of termination of license" on all plotholders in Old Bondeni and the Somali location. This required them to quit their plots and surrender them in one year's time.

The first stages of the municipal housing estate programme, which the demolition was to be tied to, were Kivumbini I and II. These were both scheduled for opening in 1953 and added 624 dwelling rooms. (N.C.N. Housing and Estates Department files, memorandum on council estates, 1974) Because of the pressing need for worker accommodation, the housing was spoken of in terms of bedspaces, in this case three to a room. But the estates attracted the interest of other local authorities because the housing was designed to bridge the gap between this urgent short-term need for bedspaces to house single workers and long-term needs for family accommodation.²³ The structures consisted of back-to-back units of four single rooms. They could be converted

21. By 1953 Nakuru was governed by a Municipal Council, an improvement over the board structure; this was in keeping with Nakuru's development aspirations.

22. The capital estimates for 1953 budgeted £270,000 for the five-year housing plan. Of this, £120,000, or the largest single sum, was for African housing. (Housing Committee meeting, 13 August 1952)

23. Nakuru's reputation was high as it had been singled out by the labour advisor to the Secretary of State as having the best native housing of any small town in British Africa. See the description in 9.

into two-roomed family units with W.C. and kitchen added on. The demands of continued growth which lasted into the late 1950s, growth expectations and the housing lag lasting into the early 1960s (until the pre-independence panic), and of course the need to relocate Old Bondeni residents in order to get on with demolition, meant that this design option was seldom used.²⁴

Phases of Demolition and Debate

Within a few weeks of the quit notices being served, a letter was received by the Council from six plotholders representing the householders in Old Bondeni. They asked for a meeting with the Council to further consider the matter. The Council responded by putting off the meeting while a "detailed memorandum ... outlining the Council's proposals for future development of the whole area" was being prepared (Housing and Estates Committee meeting, 21 September 1953), and at a subsequent meeting chose a committee to attend the meeting (M.N.C. meeting, 5 October 1953) with representatives from the locations (one of whom must be a Somali). (Town Planning Committee meeting, 7 October 1953)

The meeting took place before the memorandum was officially completed.²⁵ I will set out the main points covered in the meeting in some detail because much the same ground was to be covered in every subsequent meeting. The meeting, being only an initial statement and first tentative questioning of redevelopment policy, was relatively calm and coherent. Other meetings will be contrasted with this one mainly in terms of the polarisation of views and the style of interaction.

The meeting was opened by the Mayor who expressed the "earnest wish of the Council to assist . . . in every way possible". He then outlined the Council's policy:

- 1) In no circumstances could the Council agree to any extension.
- 2) No compensation would be considered.
- 3) Displaced persons would either be offered alternative accommodation in municipal housing or on plots of land which they could develop themselves at appropriate standards.
- 4) In genuine cases of hardship the Council would consider offering financial assistance under the terms of the Vasey scheme. (11)
- 5) Plotholders with sufficient funds should consider themselves suitable applicants for the Council's tenant purchase type houses.

24. Interviews with W. Sayer, Nakuru, 1974.

25. This meeting was held on 24 November 1953. The Mayor was in the chair, the D.C., the Deputy Mayor and four Councillors represented the administration, while four Bondeni householders and one Somali elder represented the licensees.

- 6) The Council would give special consideration to those cases where hardship was likely to be suffered where elderly men and women were concerned, to ensure that they would be re-accommodated within the means at their disposal. However, the responsibility for elderly people fell primarily on their families and each case would be very carefully considered on its merits.
- 7) To enable the Council to appreciate the circumstances of all residents in Bondeni and Somali locations, it had been decided to carry out a detailed survey.
- 8) It should be clear to everyone that no householders in either location possessed any legal title to their plots.
- 9) To enable people to develop their own plots in permanent materials it was possible that additional land might be included in the location.
- 10) The demolition would be carried out in phases, depending upon the land requirements of the Council.

These points answered some of the questions that the householders had listed on their agenda. These included requests for an extension of the quit deadline from one year to ten years in the case of Bondeni and to five years for the Somali location, compensation for the houses, that landlords be given advance warning of demolition, etc. They also made additional requests which were referred to appropriate Council committees for consideration. These included the request that leases on new plots be for longer terms than the suggested 40 years; that existing shopkeepers be given priority in the allotment of tenancies in the new trading centre; that the Council permit the establishment of shops in the residential areas as well; that individuals be allowed to build their houses in stages as their financial situation permitted; and that, in view of the fact that many ploholders earned their living by the establishment of lodging houses, the Council consider the erection of suitable houses for renting or tenant-purchase.

The beginning of demolition came as a great shock to people - crowds watched the bulldozers do their work.²⁶ Even after the planning and the notices,²⁷ the meetings and the clarifications, demolition had little sense

26. Interview with Mr. S.L. Ojuka, 18 March 1974.

27. From 1953 on, rent receipts from householders were endorsed with the legend "property subject to demolition, no compensation payable". (Letter from Senior D.C. to Secretary for Local Government, Nairobi, 29 June 1956)

of actuality until it happened. (Perhaps that was partly because of the necessarily long discussions; it seemed it could be discussed forever.) The first phases of demolition however did not create any very organised opposition. Small areas of Old Bondeni were cleared (to make room for expansion of social services of various sorts) and tenants were moved into municipal housing - Kivumbini II and later Shauri Yako when it was opened in 1955.²⁸ A pilot tenant-purchase scheme of twelve houses had been built in 1954 which might have catered for (but was not expressly built for) some plottolders who had capital, but the terms were not very attractive and plottolders did not take it up.²⁹ Concessions to bona-fide plottolders, i.e. original licensees or their dependents, might properly take the form of leasehold plots they would develop themselves (as was argued by the resident magistrate in his judgement of 22 May 1956). But all in all, the plottolders had not pressed their case to the fullest yet.

Opposition to the program of demolition increased when the Council finally came to consider demolition of the Somali Location. There were several reasons why the Somalis, who in many respects did not differ greatly from the bulk of Bondeni plottolders (who were equally long-term, fully-committed urban-dwellers, also Muslim, also earning much of their income from house rents, etc.), were able to force their special interests on the attention of the civic authorities. The first is that, as they formed a relatively small group and were to face demolition all at one time, it was easier for them to put up a common fight. Bondeni plottolders who might have years more enjoyment of their housing would not be so likely to form a strong common front when only small sections of Bondeni were being demolished in the early phases.

A second major reason is more complex and more interesting in terms of the nature of the debate that ensued: namely, the administrative status of the Somalis. The Somalis were not regarded as Africans by the colonial government, and in part at least, because the Somalis grew up with these legal definitions of the British, they also saw themselves as apart from the African community. The very fact of a specific Somali location confirmed

28. These estate names do tell a story of political conflict of a sort which took place in that era. Kivumbini (in the dust) was not a popular name with the Council; it symbolised the poor conditions that Africans saw themselves as suffering compared to other groups in the city. Lake Nakuru was nearly dry at that time and acrid soda dust blew into the estates (and only to a lesser extent further up into the town); hence this name. Shauri Yake (your problem) was supposedly adopted as a name in that this housing was to be accepted by people who were redeveloped out of a room; finding any alternative was their problem.

29. Letter from Senior D.C. to Secretary for Local Government, Nairobi, 29 June 1956.

their separateness and reinforced their sense of community. They owed their separate status (as they did their plots) to a historical relationship with the Crown: a "child of colonialism", one of several sorts that the Kenya colony produced. This gave them some additional leverage. Africans, very tightly controlled during the Emergency, could not so easily organise themselves in opposition to the authorities. Demolition was relatively easy for the municipality under these circumstances when Africans had to be careful how they responded. Somalis could take a slightly different tack.

The Council knew that the Somalis had political resources to fight for their interests. They were anxious not to be embarrassed or to have the colonial administration embarrassed. The Somalis had shown their willingness to fight during the Bondeni demolitions of 1956 when they prevailed upon the Kenya Muslim League to petition against this demolition to government and took the matter outside the local arena.³⁰ The Council therefore took a long time over preliminaries, trying to tie the Somalis to various agreements. In a meeting between Council representatives, the Divisional Engineer, the railroad corporation and Somali representatives held on August 9, 1957, the plot for the new Somali location was visited and a general baraza (meeting) was planned to get Somali approval. The Town Clerk approached the Somalis' lawyers, the firm of Shaply, Barret and Allen, advocates in Nairobi, to try to arrange for an irrevocable agreement to be signed so as to avoid "any possible misunderstanding when the time comes for development, as, from past experience, while the Somali Elders have always proved themselves most cooperative, misunderstandings have often occurred".³¹

The Council updated the public health evidence for demolition in a report by the Medical Officer of Health:-

On the 16th of June 1958, the Deputy Town Clerk ... and I made a tour of inspection of the Bondeni and Somali Locations....

... Cesspits, pits and rubbish dumps are spread over the area.... The number of choos is far below that necessary for the population.

The structure of these old dilapidated houses is such as to harbour vermin and insects of almost all varieties found in human dwellings, and it is obvious that were plague to break out... the entire population would have to be moved at once.... Only demolition with the aid of fire ... could ... make the area reasonably safe for building later.

30. Letter revealing this situation from the D.C., Nakuru to the P.C., Rift Valley Province, 14 July 1958.

31. Letter from the Town Clerk to the Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, 15 August 1957.

Overcrowding is at once apparent.... Entire families of 4 or 5 persons are living in single rooms, and the party walls are in many cases incomplete so that privacy between neighbours is quite impossible.

The water supply is from outdoor standpipes, which drift and make the surrounding ground soggy and a place eminently suited for the spread of hookworm.

Ventilation is by chance and not by management; cracks in walls.... Many of these cracks are of such size as to provide a threat of physical injury to children by the falling of building materials on them.

Floors are in almost all cases of mud, and a large population of them are at such a level as are apt to become water-logged and boggy in wet weather.

The Council also reviewed the administrative and political pros and cons of the two paths open to them to force demolition:³² the Recovery of Possession of Property Ordinance whereby the whole plot is demolished (used in the Old Bondeni demolitions) or the Public Health Ordinance whereby each room or family unit would be considered a dwelling. The latter method was obviously more cumbersome but it was not as politically sensitive as it was based on relatively impartial public health criteria. Using the Public Health Ordinance, a larger number of houses could be demolished in part, a group of rooms at a time. So it was decided that this increasingly sensitive programme of redevelopment would proceed on this latter basis.

Given the fact that the Council had proven its willingness to demolish and had the appropriate legal tools to do so, opposition was focussed not against the demolition itself but against the redevelopment plan in an attempt to push it in the direction of the interest group - in this case the Somali householders. This debate was indeed to force the administration, albeit very grudgingly, to build their plans around the rehousing of the plotholders. In this regard the minutes of a meeting held between Somali elders, the Town Clerk and the District Commissioner are interesting, especially when compared to the meeting of 24 November 1953 outlined above.

This meeting was between five Somali representatives on one side and the Town Clerk, his Deputy and the D.C. on the other. The following is an outline of their discussion:-

32. At a joint meeting of the Finance and General Purposes and Public Health Committees.

The Somali elders stated they had requested the meeting to see the Municipal Council with regard to promises made to build houses on a hire purchase scheme for members of the Somali community. The Town Clerk stated at the outset that the Council had not promised to build houses but would try to obtain loan funds from the government. The Somalis reiterated their version of the story and said that the Somali community had agreed to the suggested monthly rental of 280/50.

The Town Clerk repeated that at no time had a firm promise been made and further that he had no recollection whatsoever of the figure 280/50 per month. He referred to the information given the Somali elders by the Council's Housing and Estates Officer wherein it had been proved to the Somalis that the income from a house with nine rooms would be 350/- whereas the monthly outgoings would be 354/- and for a 12 room house the monthly income would be 495/- and the outgoings 516/75. In view of these figures, the Council were satisfied that the proposal to erect rental houses on a hire purchase system was not economically possible.

The Somalis referred to the alternate accommodation available in the number 4 housing scheme and stated they could not afford to pay the monthly rent for such houses. They stated they would be much happier if they could build their own houses in the new Somali Location and would agree to pay the Council whatever the Council assessed as rent.

The Town Clerk noted that there was an inconsistency here. The houseowners replied that if they were to build their own houses, they would endeavor to obtain any shortfall from someone else who might help them. In the meantime they asked whether it would not be possible to defer demolition until some decision on the application for a government loan could be received. This was denied.

The Somalis stated that in these circumstances the Council and the government were throwing them out on the street as they could not afford a house in the new scheme. They had no money and as far as they were concerned it was now up to the government to do what they liked.

The D.C. responded that they were in effect asking to undertake a financial liability over a period of 20 years. They would have no income whatsoever and only face a monthly deficit. The houseowners stated that they hoped to make up this deficit from somewhere and that this way the houses would be theirs at the end of 20 years. The government had originally authorized them to live in their present location and as the government now wanted them to move it should make available funds for them to build new houses. The elders would like to be told how they should live, as they had no businesses and they

were living on the income from rents.

The D.C. rejected this statement as a complete self-contradiction. The elders responded that they would just lie in the streets and die

The D.C., noting the fact that the Somali community had received not less than five years warning of the forthcoming demolition said that they as leaders of the Somali community should have made plans to meet the situation when it arrived. His best advice for them was to build small houses on the plots available and as and when they acquired additional funds they might consider extending them.

This meeting and other similar ones which took place afterwards were thoroughly unsatisfactory as far as the Somalis were concerned. Aside from being characterised by a high level of sophistry on all sides, it was the unstated propositions that made true dialogue impossible. With careful ingenuousness the administration argued that the householders could no longer afford to own rental houses. The Somalis could only fall back on restatements of their special relationship to the government.³³ There was no way of explicitly stating in this atmosphere of piously assumed legality, that rent controls or no, the Somalis knew they could derive income from large rental houses. That the administration knew this too was obvious as was their desire to limit the possibilities for Somalis to become large-scale renters again, given the many administrative headaches caused by many charges of rent abuse levelled against the landlords by their tenants and the counter-charges of rent evasion they brought against their tenants.

Their attempts to again widen the arena of debate, as in their meeting with the Minister of Housing (on August 19, 1958) wherein the Minister gravely lectured them on the limits of his ministerial authority which did not extend to demolition but only to the construction of houses, were thus largely frustrated. Still, the effect of this extensive politicking, although not all the Somalis might have hoped, was a better offer than previous ploholders had been given. In the compromise first worked out by the Provincial Commissioner, the Somalis were given double plots (many soon divided among an enlarged group of owners) and small three-room tenant-purchase houses built for them on long-term government loans, designed so as to be easily enlargeable for rental purposes. Businessmen applied to have business premises built into their dwellings, and (at a fee) this was done. Their success in getting concessions from the administration should be measured not only against that which came before but against the weak legal position from which they were forced to argue. Two of the recalcitrant houseowners

33. For illustrations of this see Appendix 1 of Wachtel, 24.

(both non-resident in the buildings) were taken to court to try to bring the rest of the community in line, and while the senior resident magistrate's judgement,³⁴ a tongue-lashing of considerable severity which undercut all their arguments, might have inclined the community to accept a compromise, it is interesting that this did not do more to push the Council back to a central focus on the tenants.

The official opening of the New Somali Location took place on 30 May 1959 with considerable fanfare. Invited guests included the Ministers of Local Government and of Housing, the Commissioner of Lands, the Director of Surveys and the Town Planning Advisor, an impressive list from the national administration, reflecting the scale of the political battle which was ending.

The last phase of demolition in the Old Bondeni redevelopment scheme thus far took place during and after the Somali location programme and was much affected by it. The same legal approach was taken by the Council, using the Public Health Ordinance provisions. The tenants could go into the fifth Municipal Housing Scheme then under construction (Kaloleni Estate), and a tenant-purchase scheme was developed for the plotholders (plot 73-77). Businessmen who wanted to relocate within the residential area (as was allowed to a certain extent in the New Somali Location), did not get that concession in this case as the Council was busy filling a commercial centre to serve the surrounding municipal housing estates as a group. This arrangement seemed to be about the best that the plotholders could expect, and everyone seemed willing to work through this phase of Bondeni redevelopment without going to court.³⁵ Such an agreement was in fact reached in the special subcommittee meeting of the General Ward Council held on 3 June 1959.

There were delays though. Landlords argued special problems in finding alternative housing for all their dependents, new tenants popped up as soon as old ones were rehoused and claimed to have been there all the time (some of these were destitutes and represented a special problem in rehousing), and the business establishments in two of the houses remained long after the rest had been demolished as the business owners dickered for more time to wind up their affairs.³⁶ (one diehard vacated his business premises

34. The judgement is excerpted in Appendix 3, Wachtel, 24.

35. Letter from the Town Clerk to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Nairobi, 31 July 1959.

36. Report on the progress of the demolition submitted by the Town Clerk, 18 July 1960, and letter on remaining demolition from Housing and Estates Officer to Town Clerk, 22 September 1960.

in February 1961 but continued to live in the back).³⁷ Worse than delays, other sorts of problems came up. Two of the six plotholders, owners of plots 76 and 77, did not join in the agreement with the Council. Perhaps initially this was because they were absentee landlords living in other towns and the Council's contact with them through their caretakers was poor. In any case it was necessary to take all heads of households in these two houses to court and secure eviction notices. (Criminal cases, MCN vs. occupiers of plots 76 and 77, Bondeni, 9 November 1959). But a more worrisome reason for this stubbornness was that the tenants of these houses now had cause to join with the plotholders in refusing to budge. Because of their policy of keeping rents 'economic' in the municipal housing estates, the Council found itself forced to raise rents in the new housing in which these tenants were to be relocated. The tenants, angered by what they regarded as an underhanded move, and backed by the Nakuru African District Congress, refused to cooperate further and the Council was forced to sort the matter out through the courts.³⁸ Thus even in this latest phase of demolition, despite all that had gone before that should have led to a regularisation and routinisation of the development process, issues continued to arise which obstructed swift and orderly development.

Because of these various problems and delays, the decade during which the housing policies outlined above were in force saw only limited demolition and little redevelopment of the Old Bondeni area. The Somali location was virtually all destroyed and rebuilt elsewhere, but Old Bondeni itself was mostly harassed. Demolition took place along the southern and eastern edges, leaving the bulk (and in fact the oldest and probably the most objectionable part from a public health point of view) untouched.

INDEPENDENCE AND A NEW MUNICIPAL DECISION-MAKING QUANDRY

Independence was the symbol of the rise of a new order. It represented the rejection of the junior-partner multi-racialism and reestablished the African community as having the preeminent interest in the nation's development. That had certain, again somewhat symbolic, implications for housing policy. The concepts of 'African housing' and 'African locations'

37. Letter regarding the tearoom on plot 73 from the Town Clerk to the Municipal Medical Officer of Health, 22 February 1961.

38. Letter from Town Clerk to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Health and Town Planning, 4 November 1959.

were unacceptable, and so housing policy became more unified under a socio-economic model. Low-cost housing remained the problem mainly of the Council. "Bedspace" was to be deleted from the planning vocabulary, and building single room units became not merely undesirable but suspect.³⁹

Nakuru's economic role in relation to its hinterland did not change fundamentally in this period (nor indeed did the country's general economic posture). So in the sense that the new order had to deal with essentially the same economic structure, there was a continuity in problems and to some extent in the policies and planned solutions.⁴⁰ To return to our case study, Old Bondeni was found undesirable by the new Authority for most of the same reasons given by the old Council, and its demolition and redevelopment represented much the same kind of problem for the local authorities, only, as is argued below, the problem became nearly insurmountable.

Independence brought a change in the position of local authorities in Kenya, even long-standing ones such as the Nakuru Municipal Council. One aspect of this was that while in the preceding period and especially during the Emergency there had been a sort of mutually protective compact among the municipal authority, district and central elements of the administration and the legislators, which had worked to keep Old Bondeni redevelopment a local issue under local control, that compact no longer existed. Instead initiatives and intervention in municipal housing plans and even in problems such as the Old Bondeni redevelopment began to come from outside the local authority and the possibilities for turning redevelopment into a political issue at several levels increased.

A related aspect was the fiscal position of the town. Towns took on new responsibilities, the most onerous of which was primary education.

39. Municipal authorities in the 1950s planned to provide adequate family accommodation for the stabilised work force and sought to **abandon** the bedspace concept. However, housing shortages and economic considerations made it expedient to build mostly single-room units. At Independence, municipal housing consisted of 3,676 one-room, 288 two-room (some of these tenant-purchase units) and 16 three-room dwellings (some tenant purchase). Early post-independence housing proposals differed from these late colonial ones not so much in substance as in tone. See, for example, the very interesting Annual Report of the Social Services and Housing Department, City Council of Nairobi, 1964.

40. See Annual Report of the Social Services and Housing Department, City Council of Nairobi, 1967, which reads:-

It must be remembered that good housing conditions not only promote health of the mind. They promote health, happiness and contentment thereby helping to preserve an orderly and peaceful community. As His Worship the Mayor ... said to our President last year ... "The effects of bad housing are vastly expensive to the community in terms of human suffering, impaired efficiency, sickness and death and as such are a handicap to our economic growth."

Their revenues, through rates, licenses, lettings and a share of the recently repealed graduated personal tax (in effect a tax which penalised smaller centres in favour of headquarter towns), were not adequate (see 17) and their credit-worthiness poor. Worse still, central authorities had little faith in the administrative capabilities of local governments or the intentions of local politicians.⁴¹ Proposals and programmes coming from the local authorities were carefully vetted and in this sense too the central administration assumed a more interventionist approach. The open lack of confidence in local authorities did nothing to improve the situation. Even relatively well-organised authorities such as the Nakuru Council suffered from this distance that had grown between the levels of government.

Many local authorities have indeed beggared themselves and although Nakuru's affairs are not in this state, even the largest towns have difficulty nowadays securing the money to maintain an adequate housing programme. But adequate housing is one of the most visible 'fruits of Uhuru' and therefore a political essential. Caught in this bind, it is little wonder that programmes are always under review, all solutions are reevaluated and, while problems and goals may still seem clear, housing policy itself is fluid.

After Demolition, What?

The immediate pre-independence years were ones of uncertainty marked by a significant contraction of the economy. This and the short life of new policies meant that in the main the old policy directions were maintained and new programmes were launched not so much to initiate development, but in reaction to pressing problems.

In Nakuru pressing problems arose quickly when controls on movement and access were lifted as the Emergency period came to a close. The town received a large inflow of former squatters, detainees and repatriated persons, people who had been bottled up during the Emergency. (M.C.N. Social Service Department, monthly reports, 1960-1962.) This influx coincided with a period of serious business contraction, thus requiring a smaller work force in absolute terms, and represented in relative terms a dramatic problem of unemployment and destitution.

The implications of this situation in terms of housing were that the Council for a time was confronted with increased overcrowding in their own low-cost estates and in low-cost 'problem areas' such as Old Bondeni.

41. See H. Colebatch, 1, for a review of the crisis-oriented approach of local authorities and the effects of interventionist policies on the part of central agencies in weakening local effectiveness still further.

At the same time, the Council could not easily fill its medium- and higher-rent estates, and thus faced a revenue shortfall complicated by increased demands on services.⁴² The last major housing project of the colonial era, Flamingo Estate (opened in 1962), went some way toward easing this situation, adding over 1,000 units of low-rent, single-room accommodation. But because of the increased low-income population, even this large project did not allow much scope for rehousing Old Bondeni residents to pave the way for a further phase of demolition.

The new Council did not find its economic position much improved. Uncertainty persisted for a number of years in this transitional period. It took some time too for the new rural landowner group (small-holders being introduced to cash crops and new large-scale ventures) in Nakuru's hinterland to take up the slack and establish a production pattern that would allow for further growth. (see 2, for example) It was not until the late 1960s that Nakuru's economy was on the upswing and not until the 1970s that large-scale investment and expansion started taking place.⁴³

But while the economy may have been at a low, expectations were increasing, and the new Council was given further responsibilities. The political pressures were great. Again this made it impossible on one hand to ignore the question of Old Bondeni's redevelopment and on the other very difficult and politically uncomfortable to deal with it.

At first glance it would seem that the Council did ignore it. If we look at municipal estates built since 1963 we see a very different pattern from the pre-independence years. If we include tenant-purchase and mortgage schemes in the list, there were 456 one-room, 602 two-room, 199 three-room and 20 five-room dwellings built. Moreover the single-room accommodation (Dedan Kimathi Estate) was completed in the first years of Independence and was a sort of continuation of the Flamingo Estate.⁴⁴ This is manifestly not a low-income housing policy. But this does an injustice to the Council because it was trying to work out policies explicitly aimed at redeveloping Old Bondeni during this period. It is to these attempts that we now turn.

42. See, for example, Housing and Estates Committee meeting of 10 December 1962 and Nakuru District Annual Reports, 1961 and 1963.

43. This trend can be traced in governmental statistical reports, e.g., Employment and Earnings in the Modern Sector, 1963-67 and 1968-70. In Nakuru, recent development has included a battery factory, a rubber products plant and expansion in the agro-industrial sector in pyrethrum processing, grain handling and storage, and edible oil milling.

44. M.C.N. Housing and Estates Department, memorandum on housing estates, 1974.

During the course of the three phases of Old Bondeni demolition, the householders had again and again put forth their claims to special consideration and, though rebuffed by the courts, they did establish themselves as an interest group the Council had to take into account. That is, Bondeni redevelopment involved two problems: how to rehouse the tenants and how to deal with the householders. The solution most palatable to the householder group was to recombine the two problems and find a solution that would as far as possible preserve the householder's position, i.e., give him a potential rental income. The advantage that this approach had for the Council was that the rental potential could be applied to loan repayments. In 1964 the Municipal Council opted for this solution and inquired about the possibilities of a £500,000 loan from the Central Housing Board to enable private plotheolders to redevelop their plots.⁴⁵ This was refused with the explanation that no funds for such a project were then available.⁴⁶

The Commissioner of Lands, impatient at the lack of progress in redevelopment, asked the Council in late 1965 to surrender title of the land so it would be granted to individuals, since it did not seem to be in a position to rebuild Bondeni on its own as a rental scheme.⁴⁷ The Council tried to make its position clear.⁴⁸ It was willing to see the site redeveloped by the householders and other individuals, but under long leases so it could better monitor the redevelopment process.

The Council cast about for other possible solutions. The Commissioner of Lands was informed a few months later that no policy would be set out for Old Bondeni redevelopment "until the position regarding the proposed site-and-service scheme has been finalised".⁴⁹ Now seemed to be the time for site-and-service.

Site-and-service was a planners' not a politicians' solution. Its main attractiveness lay in its low cost, i.e., its practicality or rather the way in which it could potentially mobilise the resources of even low-income groups so that they shared the housing costs directly. The drawback from a

45. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Town Clerk to Chief Executive Officer, Central Housing Board, 29 February 1964.

46. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, reply of Chief Executive Officer, Central Housing Board, to Town Clerk, 2 July 1965.

47. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Commissioner of Lands to Town Clerk, 23 December 1965.

48. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, report from Town Clerk to Commissioner of Lands, 13 January 1966.

49. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Town Clerk to Town Planning Advisor, 30 July 1966.

strictly political point of view was that it was not as impressive as housing and it was difficult to control. There were other pros and cons, but really there was no debate. Site-and-service was being touted nationally (internationally in fact). Nairobi, for one, had embarked on a pilot scheme at Kariobangi and was putting the best possible complexion on the results.⁵⁰ Moreover there was money for it. Nonetheless it was not to be a solution to the Old Bondeni problem. The location of the scheme did not appeal to much of the householder group because it was far from the mosque and other centres of community life. Then too, the Council did not wish to give up too much control and intended to enforce high building standards (which for many meant prohibitive costs). The house designs the Council strongly suggested did not give much scope for rental accommodation. And of course rents large enough to give a decent return on investment precluded the housing of Old Bondeni tenants in such a scheme. A site-and-service scheme (Langa Langa I and II) was put into effect, a substantial amount of fairly good housing was added to the town's stock, but none of this touched on the Old Bondeni problem.

That being the case, the solution which commended itself to the Council was a tenant-purchase scheme.⁵¹ It was being applied at Nairobi in the Pumwani Redevelopment Scheme : i.e., in an almost exactly comparable situation (as to both housing and community features) to Old Bondeni. In 1968, the Council was working on this plan, intending to give Bondeni house-owners priority in the scheme. A sub-committee was sent to tour Pumwani and

50. The Annual Report of the Social Services and Housing Department, City Council of Nairobi, 1965, stated:-

[the] Kariobangi site and service scheme ... [was] providing much needed cheap accommodation to the low income groups employed by commercial firms and the government Thirteen and a half per cent of the total number originally given plots in the scheme actually lived on site; 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ % lived in the city but outside the scheme; 79% of those who lived away from the site constructed and completed houses in the scheme from which they collected monthly rents at an average of shillings 45/=.

This is a nice way of gliding over the fact that site-and-service schemes seemed to represent a temporary windfall for poor allottees, and a long-term investment return for people who could actually afford to build, who in many cases continued to live in other accommodation, often Municipal estates.

51. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Town Clerk to Town Planning Advisor, 30 June 1966.

report on its possible application.⁵² They returned impressed but discouraged. The multi-storied blocks of flats in New Pumwani seemed altogether too grandiose, too expensive for the Bondeni householders (and of course no help in rehousing the tenant population). They had envisioned a more modest scheme for Old Bondeni with householders getting houses with two additional rooms, the rent from which would be collected by the Council in repayment of loans.

Aside from the authorities in Nairobi who vetted their plans, the Council's work was being watched by several groups who had an interest in the scheme. The houseowner group which had been brought together by redevelopment at various points in its history finally organised itself formally in 1969. Under the leadership of a cadre of influential community members, the house-owners registered in March 1969 as the Bondeni Plotholders Company with a wide-ranging constitution.⁵³ One of their principal aims was to present an organised and united front in redevelopment discussions, to press their case and to keep their membership informed about the implications of plans and decisions.⁵⁴ They had in fact been active for some time prior to official registration, under various guises. Under the provisional title of Bondeni Building Company they held a tea for councillors and other officials on 10 November 1968 to sound them out. (treasurer's files, 10 November 1968) In effect the company has been something of a mutual defense group. The houseowners' posture has remained a reactive one, commenting on proposals but feeling it not their place (nor in their interests as somewhat beleaguered defenders of the status quo) to initiate plans.

Other interested parties who entered the discussion at this point were national level politicians. When the Minister for Housing, the Hon. Paul Ngei, visited Nakuru to open a municipal housing estate, the M.P. from the Nakuru area, Mr. Mwithaga, took the opportunity to raise the question of uncompleted redevelopment of Old Bondeni. This was embarrassing for the Council because it received national press coverage which focussed on the fact that old, overcrowded locations such as Old Bondeni were a disappointment

52. Report on Pumwani redevelopment scheme, M.C.N. subcommittee, 18 November 1968.

53. Bondeni Plotholders Co., files, constitution and correspondence.

54. From interviews with members of the company's executive, Old Bondeni, 1974. The company continued to press for large boarding-house type buildings for the tenant-purchase scheme, even though this was consistently rejected as much too costly by the municipal authorities. They complained that the proposed house designs were nice, but were just too small. Even aside from tenants, they had relatives they housed, etc.

after some years of independence, rather than focussing on positive municipal achievements, i.e., the opening of the municipal estate. It also had a positive effect in Council eyes in that the Minister made general promises of assistance and asked for certain information. The municipal administration eventually submitted a quite detailed report based on a large-scale social survey of the area's residents.⁵⁵ The Municipal Council carried on with its plans hopeful that they would be approved.⁵⁶

Ministry of Housing officials intervened at several stages, rejecting a simple single storey design submitted in 1971 on the grounds that it was "unenterprising" and "monotonous" in its architectural impact. They sent instead a suggestion for a double storey plan which would be more interesting and economical in terms of land use.⁵⁷ Municipal authorities balked at this. They had surveys which indicated the financial capabilities of Old Bondeni residents and sent a delegation to the Ministry to try to straighten the matter out.⁵⁸

In 1972, having considered the problems involved in phased redevelopment of the Old Bondeni site, they resited the scheme on the nearby empty Old Prison's area, just to the west, and had the area surveyed, laid out and planned.⁵⁹ This site met with the approval of the houseowner group as its location was convenient and near enough to the mosque to satisfy the Islamic segment. Houseowners liked the designs, although as always they would have preferred even more rental space. Former householders who had never been compensated in the demolitions got their names put down in a list of potential claimants drawn up by the Council.

55. Report by Housing and Estates Officer, M.C.N., to the Minister for Housing, 28 September 1971. Up-to-date surveys are a necessary precondition for redevelopment and, because of its long 'redevelopment' history, many were done of Old Bondeni for various authorities. For example, the Health Department did a physically oriented survey in 1967 for submission to the town planning advisor; the housing and estates department did a social survey in 1968 and updated it in 1971 for preparation of the report for the minister; and in 1973 the architect's office of the town engineer's department did another large social survey. For analysis based on these survey data, see Wachtel, 25.

56. Housing and Estates Committee meeting of 15 November 1971, and submission to Ministry of Housing.

57. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Ministry of Housing to Municipal Engineer, 23 December 1971.

58. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Town Clerk to Ministry of Housing, 14 February 1972.

59. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Town Engineer to M/S Hime and Zimmerlin, licensed surveyors, 7 June 1972.

The whole plan collapsed in 1974. The Ministry of Housing made it clear to the municipal authorities that it no longer financed tenant-purchase schemes from governmental development funds and suggested trying to finance the scheme through the Housing Finance Company of Kenya or foreign aid schemes. Otherwise, the Ministry could only suggest a review of alternatives, site-and-service, and so on.⁶⁰ The Housing Finance Company was approached and said there were no funds available for such a project.⁶¹

The problem has come full circle again. There is a proposed very low rent project which might potentially absorb some of Old Bondeni's residents (however there are numerous other target groups in unauthorised housing around the town and in the Council's temporary substandard estate of Pangani). There may be a new site-and-service scheme which might attract the participation of some homeowners. Aside from these sorts of plans which seem to enjoy the approval of central authorities, there is a new interest in salvage and rehabilitation of the existing housing or some sort of community improvement scheme. As of the second half of 1974, plans were still uncertain.

The Political Dimension

The redevelopment of Old Bondeni has always been more a political problem than a technical and administrative one. That is not to say that the administrative problems were simple or that the technical problems have been solved. Rather the political elements (especially the political definition of the problem) have dominated. When a stabilised African urban work force became a recognised component of the urban development programme Old Bondeni seemed to jeopardise that policy symbolically by denying progress and modernity, socially by being unmanageable, 'disorganised', and harboring marginal elements, and physically by creating a public health menace. The added impetus of the Emergency prompted a 'positive' response and actual demolition was undertaken.

The administration seemed to preserve a unified front in the face of opposition hamstrung by Emergency measures which made political confrontation difficult and actually removed some local leadership.⁶² At the same time, however, the administration was circumspect and proper in its dealings, worked hard to keep communication channels open, and coloured its actions in the most apolitical light. The administration invoked the values of development,

60. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, letter from Ministry of Housing to Nakuru Town Clerk, 8 March 1974.

61. M.C.N. archives, file A/5, internal correspondence from Municipal Treasury to Town Clerk, 6 April 1974.

62. For example, the first African representatives on the Nakuru Municipal Council were detained.

the public interest, and warned of the dangers Old Bondeni represented to health, safety and community morals. Interested parties, householders, businessmen and tenants alike, could scarcely protest. All they could press for was equitable treatment.

Municipal authorities generally did tie demolition to the availability of alternate public housing. They tried to satisfy the commercial group by creating shopping centres nearby and in some of the larger municipal housing estates. Eventually they also made concessions to the householder group, experimenting with a tenant purchase scheme and allowing Somali houseowners to reestablish themselves as lodging house proprietors. Despite all these ways in which the situation was carefully managed so as to minimise the scope for confrontation, municipal authorities failed to redevelop Old Bondeni in the last decade of colonial administration and in the process unwittingly provided an impetus for interest groups to coalesce around issues and develop channels of protest.

After Independence, municipal politicians were anxious not even to suggest an adversary relationship to the Old Bondeni population. Consultation in planning and consensus on redevelopment, however desirable, did make procedures cumbersome. But the Municipality has been constrained most by its dependence upon and accountability to central authorities and planners. The process of reconciling the requirements, demands and desires of the various interest groups within Nakuru with those arising at higher levels of government has been tortuous. The Municipality finds itself always in a reactive position, even as it is formulating plans, and it has not been able to react fast enough to secure acceptance of any "solution" to Bondeni redevelopment. As of 1974, twenty years after the area was scheduled to be razed, it seemed that Bondeni would continue to linger in this strange state of limbo unless the initiative could be returned to the local level.

In some respects, the incentives to redevelop Old Bondeni are not as strong now as formerly. The problems claimed for the area down through the years persist, but Bondeni is no longer unique. There are other areas of uncontrolled and substandard housing in Nakuru.⁶³ The municipal housing programme faces as great a demand backlog as ever.⁶⁴ Old Bondeni residents, houseowners and tenants alike, resist removal to more expensive accommodation. In the face of all this, there seems to be no specially compelling reason

63. For a discussion of one of these, see E.N.D. Ndegwa, 14.

64. For example, the 1972 Annual Report showed an increase in the number of applicants for municipal housing of 27.8% between 1970 and 1971, and 22.8% in 1972 (to a total of 5,477 applicants).

to commit resources for redevelopment.

Just as municipal authorities reluctantly have learned to live with Bondeni as a chronic but seldom acute problem, Bondeni residents live relatively placidly under the threat of removal. The difference is that, however uncomfortable the problem has been for urban authorities (and how- ever symptomatic of the difficult position in which the municipalities find themselves), it is Old Bondeni that has borne the real costs of arrested development.

It is well known that one of the best ways of systematically degrading a neighbourhood is to schedule it for demolition and redevelopment.⁶⁵ By doing so you eliminate the incentive to maintain or upgrade the properties, to preserve or initiate social or commercial ventures; often you actually disallow initiative by withholding permits, etc. Legal sanctions designed to enforce minimal compliance with standards and regulations also tend to become unenforceable.

When redevelopment is indefinitely postponed, the area is likely to decline to a level that makes any reconsideration of the decision to demolish unlikely as, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, the area becomes unsal- vageable. The impression gained in Old Bondeni is that there were enough positive factors at work to partially arrest that decline and stabilise the area.⁶⁶ But it has lost a great deal of generative potential and the popu- lation has become gradually more marginal.

The remaining advantages of Old Bondeni centre on the combination of a good central location and low absolute rents. The area is in some senses well-serviced; nearby are schools, mosques and churches, the social services complex, a small market, the fire station, etc. It is also an easy walk from the town centre. All this is obviously attractive to several groupings (see 25), among them a core of both old and young female-headed house- holders, who can translate those locational advantages into opportunities for service employment in the informal sector. Some of these activities, illegal beer selling being one example, are ambiguously affected by other

65. This proposition is explored in a number of landmark monographs, peripherally in Gans, 4, and systematically in Marris, 13.

66. One of the factors which helped was that demolition took place largely at the margins of the neighbourhood, rather than opening up major gaps. A second factor is that majengo housing with its mud and wattle walls plastered over is not difficult to maintain at some minimal level. This is not to argue that the area has been kept up, but the fact that many of the houses are owner-occupied or supervised by relatives combined with the modest outlays required for ordinary maintenance meant that housing remained at some limited standard.

nearby services - the Bondeni police station and the Municipal brewery and canteen. Except for the scarcity of garden plots nearby, a point which favours some of the peripheral unauthorised housing, and the lack of supervision in the outskirts that facilitates brewing and other illegal activities, Bondeni is 'ideal'. That is, no other area in town offers the urban poor as good a mix of advantages.

The lowest cost municipal housing estates (with the exception of the substandard 'temporary' development of Pangani erected in 1948) are both better serviced and better maintained than Bondeni, but the greatest disadvantage of these areas is cost. Rents, while low, are higher absolutely than Old Bondeni and include charges for services. To bring rents down to a level comparable to those Bondeni residents are used to involves subletting. Subdividing single room units may make them less attractive from several points of view than physically inferior accommodation in Bondeni. If we assume further that municipal housing estates are also better controlled so that, for example, conviction for illegal beer selling means possible eviction and nonstandard use of space or facilities involves the resident in bureaucratic wrangling, then the municipal housing option seems even less attractive.

The location of municipal housing estates in roughly the same area offers comparable if marginally inferior locational advantages. Distance from the Bondeni mosque has been a consideration for the Islamic segments of the community.

While everyone agrees that Old Bondeni does not provide the most desirable environment, resistance to being displaced arises from more than inertia alone. The homeowners, designated caretakers and other dependents, and many tenants would suffer real drains on their income under any of the proposed redevelopment schemes. More difficult to measure, there are certain costs to be borne arising out of community break-up and social disruption. The issue made of needing to be close to the mosque may in part be an expression of that feeling among the long-established Islamic element.

That is still phrasing the argument too negatively. It is easy to show that people are "trapped" in a slum because they have no alternatives. In this case however, Old Bondeni is not so much a choice of last resort as an area with a number of real advantages for poor residents. Without minimising the physical and environmental problems or unduly romanticising elements of community solidarity and continuity, Old Bondeni has a certain character and a positive aspect that deserves to be recognised in any redevelopment plan.

CONCLUSION: SLUM REHABILITATION

A number of fairly simple notions have slowly and painfully gained acceptance within academic urban studies and have been taken up for application to programmes of action. Among these was the recognition that not all areas of deteriorated or substandard housing could be classed indiscriminately as slums.⁶⁷ There were many different types of 'slums',⁶⁸ and the differences were fundamental not incidental. An understanding of the potential of 'slums of hope'⁶⁹ presented planners with new alternatives which were particularly attractive. The poor would willingly incur major costs of development if benefits were apparent. Moreover, the development, while often nonstandard, might result in relatively controlled areas of reasonably good quality housing.

The widespread acceptance by planners and governments of site-and-service approaches represented one major attempt to formalise and integrate this potential for action within wider developmental planning.⁷⁰ What are essentially parallel considerations lie behind the dissemination of the idea of neighbourhood rehabilitation. (For an East African example, see 6.) Finally, there is now a clearer understanding of the social implications of certain types of physical or technical redevelopment variables, (house form, estate configuration, building height, access to roads, etc.).⁷¹

Plans for Old Bondeni redevelopment have taken into account each of these important notions as they apply in the Kenyan context. They have come up with little that is encouraging. Old Bondeni housing is not rehabilitable in any usual sense. It is of semi-permanent or temporary construction of little inherent value, often poorly constructed and more often still poorly maintained. While there are stand pipes and minimal electrification, it would be extremely costly to extend the water borne

67. For example, through the work of W. Mangin and his associates in Lima, Peru. See the references in 12.

68. In this regard, the work of G.D. Suttles has fleshed out the picture of the normative/integrative aspect of certain kinds of slum communities defined along the dimensions (ethnicity, family type, socio-economic status/class, homogeneity) that have been put forward by social area analysis. See 21, for an influential American example.

69. A distinction popularised by Stokes, but implicit in many other studies. See 18.

70. The best overview of how site-and-service was initially translated in the Kenyan context is found in Houlberg, 8. For a serious evaluation and critique which fits this particular case, see Harris, 7.

71. In the U.S. context, the work with the greatest impact in terms of planning procedure has been Oscar Newman's. See 15. This work evaluates low-cost public housing schemes and sets out a number of guidelines to maximise neighbourhood security, stability and use of facilities.

sewerage grid. The area is certainly unsavoury with generally inadequate pit latrines (bucket latrines and the system of night soil collection were largely unlamented casualties of the modernisation drives). The cost of improving the area using variants of the site-and-service approach also seemed prohibitive.

Municipal surveys of houseowners⁷² showed that a large proportion claimed that their resources - income from rents, from employment or what-ever - were insufficient to pay the costs the municipality projected for site improvement and even of staged construction of housing built to municipal standards. Many tenants claimed they were unable or unwilling to pay more than their current rents for improved accommodation. While some residents reported skills useful in construction, only a small number expressed a willingness to commit time for a possible self-help housing scheme. There was no significant sign of harambee efforts directed at community improvement or maintenance; whitewashing and superficial clean-ups were organised by the city.

It seems to me, however, that these negative conclusions reflect a frame of inquiry which has been too narrow. Municipal authorities have gone from one plan of redevelopment to the next examining each idea for its applicability, but never fundamentally abandoning their original assumptions. These are: that Old Bondeni is a multi-problem area physically and socially, that it has decayed beyond any hope of simple salvage or rehabilitation, and that the major work that would be needed to rebuild it is beyond the means of the population. The logic of all the plans depends on these assumptions. But these are the original assumptions which express (and are limited by) the understandings of their day. They have locked municipal authorities and perforce Bondeni residents into a pattern of lost initiatives.

The core problem of Old Bondeni is poverty, poverty grounded in marginality and limited opportunity. While no attempt to deal with Old Bondeni can attack these fundamental problems successfully, any attempted solution which ignores them entirely (and confines itself to purely physical conditions, for example) is likely to misfire. For twenty years whatever generative force existed in Old Bondeni has been thwarted or diverted into unproductive channels. The informal sector (upon which the I.L.O. puts so much store) may indeed be dependent on the formal sector, but its virtual suppression in Old Bondeni, an area where it might logically have been expected

72. Some material from these surveys, and specifically the unpublished 1974 survey conducted by M.L. Arscott, Architect's Office, Town Engineer's Department, Municipal Council of Nakuru, is reported in Wachtel, 25.

to flourish, has further limited local development. Commercial establishments such as eating houses were forced out of the area for health reasons, and discrepant users were also removed (e.g. posha grinders). These measures made only limited sense since no real attempt was being made otherwise to maintain and improve environmental conditions. Keeping Old Bondeni in the limbo of arrested development - not granting houseowners security of tenure (for whatever reason),⁷³ not allowing construction in permanent materials, abandoning even nominal positive incentives for maintaining building exteriors and grounds - has condemned the residents to inadequate conditions.

My point is simply that the area was built up originally by local initiative. Had there been a twenty-year programme of support and guidance for property improvement and community action, rather than the two decades of uncertainty, there might be something worth salvaging and upgrading now. Change the working assumptions, encourage the population to express its stake in the community through individual and collective action monitored by municipal authorities, and then you can validly assess the redevelopment problems and prospects. In short, it is my feeling that Old Bondeni has been too much planned for and too little assisted. It has basked uncomfortably in the heat of official attention because of its visibility within a major urban centre. In retrospect, it might have been preferable had it not been so 'favoured'. In that event, the Old Bondeni community itself might have been left to show initiative and harambee spirit in order to try to win the support of government for improvements.

73. While this has been argued in terms of trying to discourage land-lordism and thus represents a tip of the hat to ideals of equity, the nature of many of the redevelopment plans and the general tenor of Kenyan urban development undermine that rationale. Certainly the colonial authorities' condemnation of Bondeni houseowners as exploiters must be seen as an interesting example of an astigmatic moral viewpoint.

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